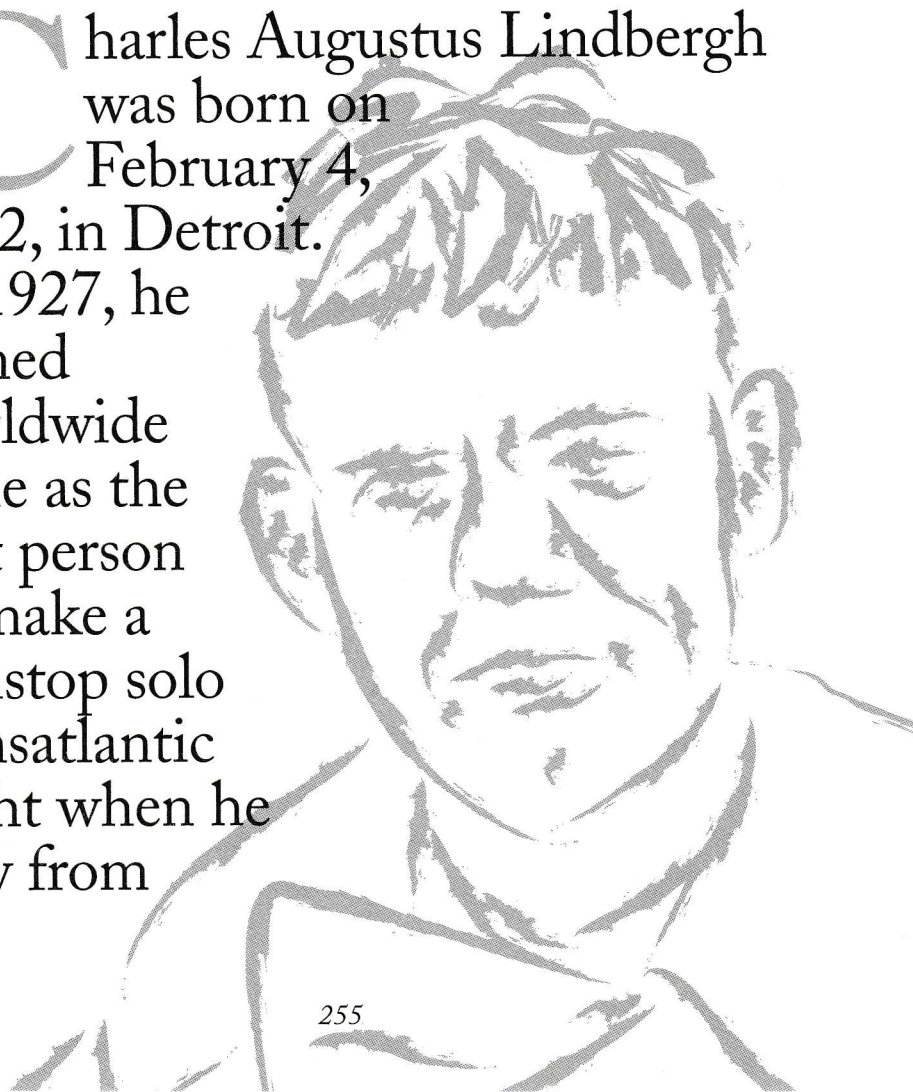


Charles A. Lindbergh

(1902–1974)

Charles Augustus Lindbergh was born on February 4, 1902, in Detroit. In 1927, he gained worldwide fame as the first person to make a nonstop solo transatlantic flight when he flew from



New York to Paris, where he was greeted by 150,000 people. Lindbergh made many other long-distance flights, but his fame was tainted by his admiration for Nazi Germany in the 1930s and his insistence that the United States should stay out of World War II (although he worked for the U.S. Air Force during the war and flew some combat missions).

In 1929 Lindbergh married Anne Morrow, daughter of the U.S. ambassador to Mexico. She later became a successful writer. The couple were subjected to intense attention in 1932, when their infant son Charles was kidnapped and murdered (Bruno Hauptmann was executed for the crime in 1936). The couple had five additional children.

Alexis Carrel of the Rockefeller Institute, a French surgeon who worked with Lindbergh to develop an artificial heart pump, described him as a great savant. Lindbergh made enormous accomplishments in various fields; his intellectual hunger was vast. He was a researcher and innovator always at the cutting edge. He died in Hawaii in August 1974.

Lindbergh showed some unusual traits, which we believe may be ascribed to Asperger Syndrome.

Family and Childhood

Lindbergh's paternal grandfather, Ola Månsson, was a politician and banker who had to leave Sweden because of illegal banking activities. He, his second wife, and baby son (Lindbergh's father) settled in Minnesota, where father and baby became August Lind-

bergh and Charles August Lindbergh. "Combating adversity with stoicism, August Lindbergh established the work ethic his descendants would emulate" (Berg, 1998, p. 7).

C. A. Lindbergh practiced as an attorney and was elected to Congress. After his first wife died at the age of 30, leaving two daughters, he married Evangeline Lodge – a science teacher and the daughter of two of Detroit's most prominent families – in 1901. They had one child: Charles Lindbergh.

The marriage was an unhappy one. Evangeline had a reputation for wild temper tantrums and wilder spending habits, and for constant nagging; C. A. was unfaithful. They lived apart from 1909. Lindbergh's family history included "financial malfeasance, flight from justice, bigamy, illegitimacy, melancholia, manic-depression, alcoholism, grievous generational conflicts, and wanton abandonment of families" (Berg, 1998, p. 25).

Possible Indicators of Asperger Syndrome

Social Behavior

As a young boy Lindbergh was taught at home by his mother, and he did not start school until he was almost 8 years of age. Later he disliked the numerous schools he attended as the family moved around, later writing that "I did not find much friendship among the children there. I did not understand them, nor they me" (Berg,

1998, p. 42). Indeed, many of the children made fun of his name, nicknaming him “Limburger” or sometimes “Cheese.” He suffered from loneliness and was never part of a group of buddies. It was noted that he was painfully shy. He became a rugged individualist like his father, and chronically restless.

In an art gallery, the young Charles was especially drawn to Hiram Powers’s *The Greek Slave*, a white marble statue of a naked girl in shackles, which may have resonated with something in himself. When he went to Redondo Union High School in California, “he made no friends ... sticking to himself, his family, and his dog, in the small cottage they rented on the beach” (Berg, 1998, p. 47). At Little Falls High School, Minnesota, he did well only in physics and mechanical drawing. Few of his classmates ever spoke to him, and he did not attend social functions. Similarly, at the University of Wisconsin, where he studied mechanical engineering, he felt like a fish out of water and “steered clear of most people, armouring his insecurity in an attitude of aloofness” (Berg, 1998, p. 55). He had no relationships with women at college and avoided tobacco and alcohol. In his army class he became “a chameleon, able to blend into any environment – to be a part of any group but always apart” (Berg, 1998, p. 77). He had no close friends.

After his transatlantic flight, Lindbergh became the first person to be constantly stalked by the media. He experienced this unwelcome fame alone, finding personal relationships difficult: “Solitude seemed the most he could wish for, and that would have to be a hard-fought achievement” (Berg, 1998, p. 176).

He was slow in getting involved with women because “you had to learn to dance, to talk their language, to escort them properly to restaurants and theatres.” However, he grew lonely and set out to marry and start a family (late in life he wrote about what he had sought in a mate: “good health, good form, good sight and hearing” (Berg, 1998, p. 193). He was linked romantically with Elisabeth Morrow but fell in love with her shy sister, Anne (who wrote that she was “swept away by the force of his personality”), and they subsequently married.

When baby Charles was born in June 1930, Lindbergh was too frightened of the baby to have any physical contact with him. He also had difficulty playing with children. Naturally, the kidnapping and death of the child upset him enormously.

Narrow Interests/Obsessiveness

In the course of his life, Charles Lindbergh had a wide range of interests, some of which became obsessions. As a child, he indulged in solitary pursuits and became an ardent collector of “stones, arrowheads, cigar bands, coins, stamps, guns, lead soldiers, marbles, cigarette cards – almost anything he could find and stash under one of the attic eaves. And he became an inveterate maker of lists, constantly updating accounts of his possessions, as though taking an inventory of himself through his things. He was happiest alone, outside, as one with nature” (Berg, 1998, p. 40). He became interested in “the wonders of science, a world of logic and intellect,” and came to believe that “science is the key to all mystery” (Berg, 1998, pp. 40–41).

Lindbergh also had a strong interest in motorcycles, and after his first flight in 1922, he became transfixed by flying. Determined

to fly from New York to Paris alone, he first set about raising the money and then did a great deal of work on the plane to make sure he had the best possible chance of succeeding. He was meticulous and obsessive in his preparation; the press gave him nicknames such as the “Flyin’ Fool” (Berg, 1998, p. 108).

Throughout his marriage to Anne, he was constantly traveling. He was fascinated by archaeology and studied it; he also studied rocketry and worked with Alexis Carrel on the development of a device that could pump blood if the heart was being operated upon. This later became known as an artificial heart. He also served as a human guinea pig in an aero-medical laboratory, thus contributing greatly to the development of high-altitude flying.

Lindbergh later became obsessed with the Cold War, to such an extent that his mother-in-law regarded him as a madman. He also got involved with wildlife and conservation issues, to which he devoted enormous energy. He was also obsessed with “improving the quality of life for future generations” (Berg, 1998, p. 529).

Charles Lindbergh died of cancer of the lymphatic system, having left extremely detailed instructions on all aspects of his burial and funeral service (like Charles de Gaulle).

Routines/Control

Military-style life suited Lindbergh well. The only aspect of university life that interested him was the Reserve Officer Training Corps program: “He looked forward to the ‘discipline of the hour-long drills.’ During the summer vacation he did six weeks of field

artillery training, where 'each regulation and command made him feel he had at last found his niche. He delighted in the detailed ritual, enjoying this perpetual quest for precision" (Berg, 1998, p. 60).

Although in some respects he was a model father, Lindbergh was inclined to rule by intimidation, and the household relaxed during his absences. According to his mother-in-law, he had to control everything in the house. He imposed precise duties on his wife, including the keeping of household books and inventories of every item they possessed.

He was extraordinarily perfectionistic, especially when writing books. Charles Scribner, the publisher of his autobiography, *The Spirit of St Louis*, described him as the most fussy author he had ever encountered, and obsessed with detail.

Language/Humor

Lindbergh's sense of humor was generally expressed through practical jokes, which could be rather crude and extreme, as he never knew when to stop.

In his freshman year in college he failed English, and some of his papers were downgraded because of bad grammar. He wished that he could stop taking English and exclusively study aeronautical engineering. However, later in his life he showed a sufficiently high degree of literary skill to win the Pulitzer Prize (for *The Spirit of St Louis*). One of his editors was very moved by his descriptions of sea, air, cloud and sky. An earlier book, *Of Flight and Life*, had evoked mild astonishment among critics at the quality of Lindbergh's prose.

Lack of Empathy

Particularly in the early years, Lindbergh admired the Germany that Hitler had created; he even received the Service Cross of the German Eagle from Hermann Goering in Berlin in October 1938. This caused him enormous problems later, particularly with the Jewish community in the United States, who thought that he had not been sufficiently sympathetic to them. He seemed to have a blind spot for Nazi anti-Semitism: He could not empathize with the suffering the Jews were experiencing in Germany. In America, some referred to Lindbergh as a doomsayer, a Nazi dupe, even a collaborator. Soon he would be called “a sombre cretin,” a man “without human feeling,” and “the Lone Ostrich” (Berg, 1998, pp. 397, 409; he had previously been idealized as “the Lone Eagle”).

Lindbergh was totally against the United States entering World War II, and “preached his beliefs with messianic fervour” (Berg, 1998, p. 7); he had great difficulty getting involved with the U.S. war effort because the government did not want him to be involved due to his lack of empathy for the official position of the United States when it became involved directly in the war.

He “buried his head in the sand when confronted with the crimes of inhumanity that repelled so many others” in Germany, and saw the USSR as the greatest long-term threat: a view that would prove correct in some respects (Berg, 1998, p. 397). Yet he was as naïve in war as he had been in peace, seeking government employment on the basis that his difference in outlook would make him of more value rather than less. More than 30 years later, he still “refused to recant anything” (Berg, 1998, p. 545).

Naivety/Childishness

Lindbergh was very much a practical joker. His naivety in wartime has also been noted. When he was courting Anne Morrow, one of her friends noted that he was immature rather than cold. He would never admit to having made mistakes. Even in 1970, in his introduction to *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, he “revealed a stubborn adherence to the beliefs he had voiced decades earlier,” and refused to recant (Berg, 1998, p. 545).

Motor Skills

Lindbergh showed poor penmanship as a boy but otherwise displayed motor skills of a very high order throughout his life; therefore, he did not meet this particular criterion of Asperger Syndrome. He could shoot accurately at the age of 7, and learned to drive a car at the age of 11. At the university he performed dangerous motorbike stunts and, of course, his prowess as an aviator is unquestioned: “sharp-sighted and coordinated, with quick reflexes, Lindbergh proved to be a natural pilot” (Berg, 1998, p. 65).

Conclusion

We believe there is strong evidence to suggest that Charles Lindbergh had Asperger Syndrome, especially in terms of his social behavior, obsessiveness, lack of empathy, and need for control.